

October 2004

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

A very wet month across most of the UK, although not as wet as 2000 for most areas. Mean temperatures generally close to average, with Northern Ireland around one degree below average.

Leuchars had its wettest October since records began in 1921. Heavy rain, spring tides and gale force south to southeasterly winds between 27th and 29th, brought flooding to many coastal areas of Cornwall, Devon and Dorset.

England and Wales diary of highlights

The month was largely wet and windy with localised flooding. However, rainfall was well short of the total experienced in October 2000.

1st to 6th: The month started very unsettled with wet and often very windy weather affecting all areas. During the period 1800 on the 2nd to 1800 on the 4th, Capel Curig recorded 77.2 mm of rain, with gusts of 58 knots on the 4th. Also on the 4th, Wittering recorded a gust of 56 knots in a heavy shower. Heavy showers with thunder occurred over north Wales, Merseyside and Norfolk late in the afternoon of the 5th.

7th to 11th: The weather settled down as high pressure built across the area, giving 10 hours of sunshine at Hunstanton on the 10th. However low pressure over Biscay started to drift northwards on the 8th, bringing rain into the far south-west on the 9th, St Mary's (Isles of Scilly) recording 26.8 mm.

12th to 19th: Numerous low pressure areas developed across England and Wales during the period giving some torrential rain in places. On the 14th there was 34 mm of rain at Heathrow and a tornado during the early hours of the morning at Horsham (West Sussex). On the 15th 63.2 mm fell at Llanbedr. A slight respite occurred on the 18th, but more rain spread into the south-west during the 19th.

20th to 26th: Low pressure remained in control with a number of frontal systems moving across the area. It was particularly wet over southern England on the 20th with thunderstorms in places, and over Wales on the 22nd and 23rd, with Capel Curig recording 65.2 mm of rain on the 22nd and Sennybridge 40 mm on the 23rd. On the 25th, strong winds affected many areas with gusts of 60 knots at Mumbles and 40 to 50 knots across southern England. It was a little calmer on the 26th with a slight air frost at Redhill in Surrey.

27th to 29th: This period was dominated by a deep area of low pressure centred to the west and south-west of Cornwall. Its central pressure fell to 953 hPa on the 27th, bringing severe gales to Devon, Cornwall and south Wales. Gusts of 59 knots were reported from Brixham on the 27th and a tornado occurred at Swanage on the 28th. Heavy rain, spring tides and gale force south to south-easterly winds brought flooding to many coastal areas of Cornwall, Devon and Dorset.

30th to 31st: High pressure built in across England and Wales to give a quieter end to the month, however with light winds and clear skies overnight, dense fog patches developed in places.

Scotland diary of highlights

October was a very active month for weather and cyclonic circulations were interrupted by high pressure only from the 8th to the 11th and the last couple of days. It was wet everywhere, especially in the east, where Leuchars had its wettest October on record (station opened in 1921).

During the first week a deep depression to the south of Iceland moved slowly east towards the northern North Sea. The weather was very active, with bands of heavy rain affecting various parts of the country on the 1st, 3rd and 5th. These were separated by periods of showery weather, with the showers being particularly heavy in the west. Sloy recorded 170 mm of rain in this period. The 3rd was mainly fair in the north and east (before the arrival of overnight rain) with the temperature reaching 16 °C at Leuchars.

A large anticyclone moved slowly east across Scotland between the 8th and the 11th, bringing dry conditions. It was rather cloudy in the centre of the high with the sunniest weather as the anticyclone was advancing and retreating,

Cyclonic conditions returned between the 12th and the 16th as a depression moved north-east across Britain to become slow moving in the North Sea. It was generally cloudy with bands of rain crossing the country, with the south and east bearing the brunt of the weather.

A quieter spell of weather was experienced on the 17th and 18th before the next cyclonic episode started. Low pressure to the south of Iceland moved south before spawning a new depression that moved north and crossed Scotland on the 21st. Bands of rain moved east and then north across the country with 40 mm at Sloy on the 20th and 38 mm at Fair Isle the next day. The wind gusted to 55 knots at Barra on the 21st and 22nd.

A brief interlude of quiet weather on the 23rd preceded a major depression moving north-east across Scotland on the 24th, with 30 mm of rain at Sloy. This was followed by more relatively fair weather as the next deep depression developed near Biscay. The temperature fell to -4 °C at Altnaharra on the 26th.

The low over Biscay pushed bands of rain and showers north across Scotland on the 28th and 29th before rising pressure brought a dry end to the month.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Cool and very wet in many areas.

The first week was unsettled with rain at times and the remnants of yet another tropical storm, this time Lisa, moved across the area overnight on the 3rd. Rainfall of 15-20 mm was recorded widely and 25 mm or more in some upland areas. A quieter interlude for all areas in the second week but nights became cooler and widespread ground frost occurred on the morning of the 9th, with an air frost at Castlederg, which had a minimum temperature of -2.1 °C.

The quieter spell was short lived and unsettled weather with rain or showers returned by the 14th and persisted through until the 19th. By the evening of the 19th however, clearing skies followed a cold front which led to a cold night with widespread frost with temperatures widely down to between -1 and -3 °C inland.

Overnight rain on the 20th brought 15-20 mm to many areas and this was followed the next day by sunny spells and heavy, thundery showers, especially in southern counties. Heavy hail, locally of 1 to 2 cm in diameter was reported from Downpatrick in the afternoon. The next few nights were again chilly with some local ground frost.

The weather in the last week became very disturbed as an intense Atlantic low approached south-west Ireland. Between the 27th and 29th, 50 mm of rain occurred over parts of Down and Armagh and severe easterly gales, accompanied by high tides produced some localised flooding along parts of the Down and Antrim coastlines. The final two days of the month then became much quieter as high pressure developed, bringing cloudy but dry conditions.

